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ABSTRACT

This publication is part of a toolkit that examines systemic barriers to achieving economic self-sufficiency for court-involved adolescents. It introduces the issue of workforce and youth development for juvenile offenders, discussing exemplary programs and policy initiatives that help court-involved youth become economically self-sufficient. To learn about effective programs, researchers contacted practitioners, funders, policymakers, and researchers, and through them identified 15 efforts that displayed promising practices for preparing youth offenders for successful education and work-related outcomes (critically applying the Promising and Effective Practices Network criteria for effective practice). Program success was based on commitment to rehabilitation, continuum of care, integrated education, system collaboration, support structures, and accountability. Tools for success included positive incentives and rewards, multidisciplinary learning, peer leadership, staff development, and youth culture. Policy initiatives that worked included innovative approaches, funding allocations and resource development, system collaboration, system flexibility, and youth development. Successful efforts tended to find a common vision and language, form partnerships, seek nontraditional funding, create broad requests for proposals, avoid the status quo, avoid territorialism, overcome barriers, encourage policy entrepreneurs, use data, address geographic mismatch, learn from events, and expect unintended consequences. (SM)

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Barriers and Promising Approaches to Workforce and Youth Development for Young Offenders

OVERVIEW

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
OVERVIEW	4
History and a Few Statistics	6
What the Research Shows	11
What Practitioners Think	15
METHODOLOGY	21
PROGRAMS AND POLICIES	25
Success Defined	25
Tools for Success	38
Policy Initiatives That Work	41
Practice Makes Policy	49
CALL TO ACTION	54
NOTES	55
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	57

introduction

With juvenile crime and justice receiving sustained attention and study, employment and training programs for court-involved young people have been examined as providing solutions to some of the challenges facing the nation's juvenile justice system. In 1997, the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) of the U.S. Department of Justice sponsored a task force to study ways of meeting the employment and training needs of young people who had been in trouble with the law. The task force was convened by the Home Builders Institute, which was searching for ways to enhance vocational preparation, reduce youth crime and recidivism, and improve the prospects for court-involved youth in the labor market.[1]

In 1999, the Annie E. Casey Foundation asked the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC), in cooperation with the Youth Development and Research Fund (YDRF) and the Justice Policy Institute (JPI), to build on the task force's work. The Foundation wanted to identify what works: exemplary programs and policy initiatives that help court-involved youth become economically self-sufficient.

The question of whether employment and training programs are the solution to the problems that confront the juvenile justice system is a legitimate one. For a good portion of the past two decades youth crime and juvenile justice have been subjected to sustained attention and study. The issues matter to policymakers, juvenile justice workers, politicians, and parents, and they matter to the young people themselves.

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1

Identify barriers to juvenile justice system reform; review the literature on youth employment, workforce development, juvenile justice.

2

Survey, synthesize information on innovative state and local policy initiatives.

3

Examine exemplary employment and development programs for court-involved youth.

THREE OBJECTIVES

what's in the toolkit?

OVERVIEW: Outlines problems and identifies solutions

PROGRAM PROFILES: Programs that display promising practices

POLICY PROFILES: Creative use of the public sector

There has always been tension in the juvenile justice system between the dual goals of punishment and rehabilitation. And in recent years, the pendulum has swung so markedly toward punishment that the system's ability to rehabilitate has been hampered. Much of the juvenile justice system's punitive approach undermines youth development.

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overview

Conventional wisdom says all adolescents need positive developmental opportunities that exercise their intellectual, psychological, social, moral, and ethical capacities. Young people benefit from experiential learning. They need to belong to groups even as they protect their individuality. Adolescents want and need adult support and interest. They need to express opinions, challenge adult assumptions, and learn to make appropriate choices and use new skills.

The alternative is what makes the nightly news: Young people who don't have positive outlets stray down dangerous paths. Gang membership, for example, meets the needs for safety and group identification, offers responsibility, and gives opportunities to practice decision-making skills and collaborative work. It also disposes adolescents to involvement in crime and violence.

Our rapidly changing society and decreasing sense of community have blocked many pathways to the experience and support young people need to move toward productive citizenship. The pervasiveness of violence and hopelessness in many communities threatens their welfare and blocks developmental opportunities. Societal commitment to create programs and services to meet young people's developmental needs is critical.

What do we know about employment programs for young offenders? A look at the history of the juvenile justice system and at some statistical information can provide perspective.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

- Employment and career-focused programs that promote self-sufficiency are comprehensive, sustained, grounded in the principles of youth development, and connected to further education or long-term career opportunities.
- Preparing for workforce success requires more than vocational training and job readiness classes.
- The barriers are significant: insufficient funding for alternative strategies, taxpayer resistance, punishment instead of empowerment, overwhelmed and dysfunctional courts, lack of interagency collaboration.

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WHAT DOES YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MEAN?

- Focus on the positive results adolescents seek and can achieve—not the negative results adults hope to prevent
- Change the subject of the dialogue from youth with problems to youth as resources
- Engage the community in supporting young people as they grow into productive citizenship

WHO NEEDS THIS TOOLKIT?

- Juvenile justice practitioners: judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, probation staff, juvenile detention and corrections facility administrators, community-based program operators
- Workforce development practitioners
- Youth development practitioners
- Youth advocates
- State, local, and community policymakers

HISTORY AND A FEW STATISTICS

From its inception, the juvenile justice system has struggled to find a happy medium between the desire to protect and rehabilitate young offenders and the mandate to punish criminals.[2] Early system reformers worked to separate juvenile from adult offenders and to understand juveniles as qualitatively different from adults and therefore as more malleable and deserving of rehabilitation. But examining the history of the first juvenile court, established in Chicago in 1899, reveals its use as the preferred alternative to the adult courts, where some believed juveniles would be treated too leniently.

After the turn of the century, the juvenile court concept spread across the nation, and by 1925, all but two states had created new systems. By the 1950s and 1960s, the tension between the rehabilitative aspects of juvenile justice and due process protections for young people accused of crimes had come into sharp focus. Public confidence in the effectiveness of rehabilitation declined, and concerns over procedural safeguards were heightened.

Between the late 1970s and early 1980s, a change began that came to full flower in the 1990s. States began to statutorily exclude entire categories of youth from juvenile

A SHORT STORY

In 1964, Jerry Gault, a 15-year-old Arizona boy, was given an indeterminate, 6-year sentence for making a crank call. The maximum adult sentence for the same offense was 60 days. When the Supreme Court heard the case, it ruled that juveniles were to be extended basic constitutional protections: the right to notice and counsel, the right to cross-examination of witnesses, and the right to protection against self-incrimination. This began a shift throughout juvenile justice, and juvenile adjudication began to follow the adult model.

court (beginning with New York in the 1970s)[3] or to give prosecutors discretion over where young offenders would be tried (beginning with Florida in the early 1980s).[4] There was a co-incident explosion in adult prison populations, and some of the more punitive aspects spilled over to juvenile justice. In the 1970s, California, often considered a bellwether state for public policy, removed "rehabilitation" as a goal of its adult correctional system and added "punishment" as a juvenile justice goal. Across the country, a mixture of punishment and treatment supplanted the emphasis on rehabilitation and prevention.

With the burgeoning juvenile justice system and concomitant growth of professionals entering the field, there has been an effort to relieve the tension by adopting "restorative justice." The juvenile codes of 17 states now include provisions incorporating offender accountability, public safety, victim restitution, and competency development.

The crack cocaine epidemic of the 1990s led to a spike in juvenile crime—especially homicides—that was met with a nationwide crackdown on youthful offenders. Between 1992 and 1997, 47 states and the District of Columbia passed laws to make juvenile justice more punitive: In 44 states and in the District of Columbia it became simpler to transfer juveniles to adult court systems, and by the end of the 1997 legislative sessions, 47 states had revoked traditional confidentiality protections.[5]

The National Center for Juvenile Justice estimated that, in 1996, more than 200,000 people under the age of 18 were prosecuted in adult courts; another 983,100 were formally processed in juvenile court that year.[6] According to the Justice Department, in 1997, 7100 young people were housed in adult prisons, nearly double the number in 1984.[7] A one-day count in 1997 revealed 9100 juveniles held in adult jails; a similar day in 1985 had 1630.[8] Another 106,000 juveniles were held in residential placement facilities in 1997—71 percent of them in locked facilities.[9] Data like these led Amnesty International to name specific human rights violations in the American juvenile justice system.[10]

Although the transfer of large numbers of juveniles into the adult system is a growing problem, the deterioration of the juvenile justice system itself is of equal, if less well publicized, concern. In *No Matter How Loud I Shout,* journalist Ed Humes wrote, "In Los Angeles, the judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys can't remember individual kids anymore, or faces or histories. They look at you as if you're insane if you name a juvenile and ask what happened to his or her case ... the kids have been reduced to categories."[11]

The juvenile court system, wrote William Ayers in *A Kind and Just Parent,* "has become by all accounts an unfit parent . . . unable to see children as three-dimensional beings or to solve the problems they bring with them through the doors, incapable of addressing the complicated needs of families. The gap between the crises faced by families and youths in trouble and the capacity of the juvenile court to address them is vast and growing."[12]

Overwhelmed Courts

It takes just 12 minutes to finish a case in Chicago's juvenile courts; in Los Angeles, it's just 4 or 5 minutes.

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS?

Less Hype, More Help: Reducing Juvenile Crime, What Works—And What Doesn't,[13] lists juvenile justice woes:

- Overwhelmed courts
- Glaring imbalances between institutional and community-based resources
- Underinvestment in community programs
- Counterproductive "net widening"

According to Krisberg and Austin, despite rhetoric "steeped in concern such as 'compassionate care' and 'individualized treatment' . . . too often the reality is assembly-line justice in which large numbers of youngsters and their families are quickly 'disposed of' through a limited number of options that rarely are adequately funded."[14]

Glaring Imbalance

There is no parity in funding for institutional versus community-based services. The United States spends $10 billion a year on juvenile justice, most of it on institutional confinement—the most expensive and least effective adjudication method—often in training schools. In 1997, only 21 percent of youthful offenders in out-of-home placements were guilty of violent offenses, but 70 percent of those in custody were held in locked facilities.[15] Between 50 and 70 percent of the young people released from those facilities are rearrested within 2 years, and there is an inverse relationship between the severity of the sanction for a first crime and the time elapsed until the second arrest. There is similar overuse in preadjudication detention: Despite sharp national declines in youth crime, populations rose by more than 20 percent between 1993 and 1997.[16] Missouri and Massachusetts stand out from the rest of the nation, closing all their large training schools for young offenders. Within a year of release, just

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REHABILITATION OR RECIDIVISM?

There has been little research on the programs and policies that will be needed to support the transition of the large numbers of young people churning through the adult prison system. Over the next 20 years, a huge number of ex-offenders will be released from prison after spending much of their adult lives—starting in adolescence—incarcerated. Setting aside the philosophical debates about treating adolescents as adults, there are likely to be profound and unforeseen consequences.

According to Columbia University researcher Jeffrey Fagan, young people who are housed with adults report they are five times as likely to be sexually assaulted, twice as likely to be assaulted by staff, and twice as likely to be assaulted with a weapon as are those who are housed in juvenile facilities.

A study by Donna Bishop and Charles Frazier evaluated the recidivism rates of matched sets of young offenders tried in adult courts and those tried in juvenile courts. Young people who were tried in the adult system were rearrested more frequently, more quickly, and for more serious offenses than were those who were retained in the juvenile justice system.

The same authors interviewed 50 young offenders who had been sent to prison and 50 sent to state "maximum risk" juvenile institutions. They reported that the young people saw a difference: The rehabilitative strengths of the juvenile justice system were absent from the adult prison system. More than half of those in the juvenile facilities expected not to offend again, 30 percent were uncertain whether they would commit another crime, and just 3 percent said they were likely to offend again. Ninety percent attributed their rehabilitation to good juvenile justice programming and services. Only one young offender in juvenile detention reported learning new ways to commit crime. Most respondents reported at least one favorable contact with a staff person.

By contrast, 40 percent of the young people held in adult facilities said they were learning new criminal methods. Most reported that the guards and staff in prisons were indifferent or hostile. Only one-third of the group in the adult facility said they expected not to offend again.

11.2 percent of Missouri's juvenile offenders were returned to its Department of Youth Services.[17]

The overuse of locked facilities contributes to subsequent delinquency, and it worsens conditions within overwhelmed juvenile facilities. According to OJJDP, nearly 70 percent of incarcerated young people are in overcrowded facilities.[18] Fewer than 50 percent of juveniles in detention centers—and just 16 percent of those in long-term institutions—are in facilities that meet all six basic health service criteria set by OJJDP.

Underinvestment

The corollary to the overuse of institutions is the second-class status of community-based alternatives to locked confinement. Although 11 percent of young people referred to juvenile court end up in residential placement, those placements disproportionately deplete juvenile justice budgets. This phenomenon results not from an overuse but from overreliance on group care and other costly and often ineffective residential options. The American Youth Policy Forum notes that the choices faced by the juvenile courts are stark—costly and debilitating institutional care versus underfunded and overloaded probation.[19] This is particularly striking, given the tremendous success of nonresidential programming, including multisystemic family therapy, functional family therapy, and advocacy and case management.

Net Widening

Juvenile crime rates have dropped since 1994, but juvenile arrests and processing through juvenile courts have continued to increase sharply. Index, or serious, crime rates for young offenders dropped by 18 percent from 1994 to 1998, but there was a 1 percent increase in the overall juvenile arrest rate, and a larger proportion of young offenders were referred as a matter of policy to juvenile court for formal processing.[20] In 1998, there were more juvenile arrests for curfew violations and for running away from home than for all violent index offenses combined. The increase in curfew arrests between 1994 and 1998 by itself accounts for the entire increase in juvenile arrests during that period.[21]

Labeling theories in sociology have long said that housing nondelinquent young people with juvenile delinquents courts disaster. Lower risk offenders subjected to intensive supervision tend to do worse, not better. And longitudinal studies show that most young people who come into contact with the juvenile justice system once never do so again (status offenders are even less likely to commit a second crime).[22] Only about 8 percent of those who have one contact have more than 3 additional contacts. It

seems wasteful to devote resources to adjudicating these young people, because so many of them would cease offending in any case.

The good news is that Americans haven't given up hope. Focus group sessions by Building Blocks for Youth[23] and polling data collected by the California Wellness Foundation,[24] for example, show the public is unwilling to give up on young people. The rehabilitative ethic is alive in the hearts of Americans, although there is a general lack of confidence in the courts' ability to hold young people accountable for their behavior and turn their own lives around. Thus, the public also has shown a reluctant willingness to support adult court waivers so that at least "something is done" with youthful offenders.

HOW CAN CASELOADS RISE AS CRIME RATES FALL?

The limited resources of the system are increasingly being stretched to cover misdemeanor and status offenders. Status offenses are acts that would not be crimes if committed by adults: truancy, running away from home, curfew violations. As serious crime rates have dropped, police have "formalized" more nonserious offenses, widening the net of social control. From 1994 to 1998, felony index offenses dropped by 18 percent but arrest rates rose:

- Simple assault: 10 percent
- Disorderly conduct: 20 percent
- Drug violations (mostly possession): 26 percent
- Curfew violations: 49 percent

So the juvenile justice system is caught in a bind: The more poorly it functions, the more the adult system will siphon off offenders and the resources needed for adjudication, and the more starved the juvenile system is for resources and public confidence, the more poorly it will function.

The challenge for youth development and juvenile justice efforts is to create programs that have a measurable effect, to collect and quantify the results of those programs, and to educate the public on how well those efforts work.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

The notion of work as a way to prevent delinquency and reform juvenile offenders is close to universal.[25] People believe that if young people have a little money in their

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WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT

In 1998, Congress passed P.L. 105-220, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), to promote a new approach to youth employment and training. The act combined the old Summer Youth Employment and Training Program with the Job Training Partnership Act's year-round program, replaced Private Industry Councils with Workforce Investment Boards, and prompted stronger links between the workforce development and juvenile justice systems. About a third of WIA funds must go to programs for out-of-school youth, requiring a shift of resources from stand-alone summer jobs programs to year-round programming. Full state implementation was required by July 1, 2000.

The act has given states and communities an incentive to combine traditional youth employment and training services, and Congress set program elements that mirror the core principles of youth development: mentoring, community service, leadership development, peer-centered activities, and long-term follow-up and supports.

Each local Workforce Investment Board establishes a youth council, which must include juvenile justice system or law enforcement representation, to advise on the selection and oversight of grant-receiving youth programs. The council develops the youth-serving portions of the local plan, names providers to receive grants from the local board, conducts provider oversight, and coordinates local youth activities. The councils facilitate the collaborative initiatives and foster the creative use of WIA and local resources.

The state Workforce Investment Boards must include "representatives of individuals and organizations that have experience with respect to youth activities." Many states are moving to establish state youth councils, which also should include representatives of the juvenile justice system.

WIA services are available to disadvantaged young people between the ages of 14 and 21. An additional requirement is that participants must face at least one of a half-dozen specific barriers to employment, one of which is court involvement.

Youth development principals are reflected in the WIA youth program requirements:

- Tutoring, study skills training, dropout prevention, alternative secondary school services, activities that promote positive social behavior outside of school hours
- Occupational skills training, summer employment opportunities linked to academic and occupational learning, paid and unpaid work, internships, job shadowing
- Leadership development, community service, peer-centered activities
- Supportive services; adult mentoring for at least a year; follow-up services for at least a year; comprehensive guidance, counseling, and drug and alcohol abuse counseling referrals

The act also established the Youth Opportunity (YO) grants initiative to direct resources to empowerment zones, enterprise communities, and other high-poverty areas and to increase employment and school completion rates of all young people. The YO program started with 36 communities' receiving grants of up to $11 million annually. The money funds comprehensive services in high-poverty areas for up to 5 years. Their projects could therefore work to collaborate with local juvenile justice agencies to ensure that juvenile offenders are included.

More information about the act, including a plain-text version in various formats, is available online: www.usworkforce.org.

pockets and are productively occupied, they will be less likely to break the law and more likely to become productive adult citizens.

The research in employment and training programs paints a more complex picture. There is strong evidence of a connection among poverty, unemployment, and delinquency.[26] Yet it cannot be said that all employment or all jobs programs have a salutary effect on that relationship. Research by Wofford and Elliott showed that the duration and intensity of work can actually promote delinquency.[27] Steinberg and Dornbusch also reported that working in excess of 15–20 hours per week during the school year was correlated with diminished school performance and increased alcohol and drug use.[28]

Wofford reported that young people who had jobs had a higher incidence of minor delinquency than did non-working juveniles. She hypothesized that employment provides freedom that young people cannot manage, and that "the jobs that adolescents hold generally promote little social bonding to adults and include simple, repetitive tasks requiring little skill or training."[29] She recommended focusing resources on programs to prepare young people to pursue worthwhile, higher paying jobs after they finish high school.

Still, there is ample evidence that employment does lead to better outcomes for delinquent young people. Elliott reported that meaningful, gainful employment correlates significantly with youthful offenders' "maturing out" of delinquent behavior as they enter young adulthood.[30] Elliott, Huizinga, and Ageton reported that the combined forces of inadequate socialization, strains between occupational and educational aspirations, and neighborhood social disorganization can lead to weak bonding to conventional social values and activities in the family, school, and community that in turn can result in a delinquent lifestyle.[31]

Troy Duster considers the disproportionate number of African-American young people who are both unemployed and involved in the criminal justice system to be no accident.[32] The workforce shift from manufacturing jobs traditionally located in inner cities populated by blacks, to service sector jobs increasingly located in suburbs populated by whites, has led to the development of a potentially permanent underclass. Duster believes that the future of youth employment efforts must be in the creation of programs that provide "clear, long-term linkages into growing careers."[33] This conclusion is echoed in research across the discipline. A major report on employment and training programs by the U.S. Department of Labor perhaps put it best: "The limited evaluation evidence that is available suggests that temporary employment programs without

additional services bring little or no post-program benefits to disadvantaged youth."[54]

Well-considered and implemented programs that promote economic self-sufficiency can help reduce delinquency and promote earning capacity. And research shows that incarceration generally worsens job prospects.[55] According to R. B. Freeman, it is incarceration, not just arrest, that is associated with poorer employment prospects in adults.[56] Moreover, not just any job or job-training program will work to help young people earn living wages and stay out of trouble.

WHAT PRACTITIONERS THINK

Practitioners echo much of the research. Youth justice experts we interviewed individually and in a focus group discussed the barriers to helping economic self-sufficiency for court-involved youth and the fact that creative solutions are desperately needed

Priorities

Correctional historian David Rothman said, "When custody meets care, custody always wins." As our nation's juvenile justice system has focused more on institutionalization and has mixed the rehabilitative focus with a punitive approach, many programs have suffered. Young offenders who at one time would have been sentenced to community settings are now placed in institutions. Once, incarcerated juveniles re-entered community life gradually; now, many are simply sent from facilities to manage the best they can. Economic self-sufficiency programs that formerly allowed participation by young offenders now bar delinquent youth. Corrections administrators who

JOB CORPS

Since 1964, the Job Corps has offered opportunity to nearly 2 million low-income young people. The public–private partnership has been found to work, and to work well. Within six months of program completion, Job Corps graduates were five times more likely to have earned a high school diploma or GED than were young people in a comparison group. They also got and kept better jobs, were less likely to be involved with the courts, and they were even healthier than their counterparts. What's the bad news? For the most part, the program is closed to court-involved youth.

For more information about the Job Corps, visit www.jobcorps.org.

contributed to the youth development discussion are left out of that conversation.

The administrators we met were frustrated by these developments because they hamper efforts to return youthful offenders to the community. Absent educational and employment opportunities, there is little for ex-offenders to do other than return to crime.

The corrections administrators admitted that they place other matters before youth employment and training issues, which are not always high on the priority list. In a world of shrinking budgets and overcrowded facilities, custodial care comes first, followed by other legally mandated items, such as health care and education. The administrators often are barely able to afford required programs—much less "add-ons" like employment and training programs.

Finally, many simply stated that employment and training programs cannot or should not be first priority. The care of juveniles faced with a constellation of challenges—multiple behavior problems, emotional or learning disabilities, family and neighborhood dysfunction, and substance abuse issues—seems to place employment well down in the hierarchy of needs. Rather, it is as part of a continuum of care, or a comprehensive approach to youth development, that administrators see employment and training programs having their greatest influence—agreeing with much of what the research has revealed.

WHAT DO PRACTITIONERS SAY?

- Higher priority for workforce development
- Stigma of court involvement hard to overcome
- Geographic obstacles hamper matching ex-offenders with jobs
- Juvenile justice philosophies prone to inconsistency
- Creative solutions vital

Stigma

Many practitioners said the stigma of involvement with the juvenile justice system poses significant challenges for workforce development. As public attitudes have shifted from promoting rehabilitation to demanding punishment, and as communities have hardened against youthful offenders, youth corrections practitioners have found that acceptance of youth employment and training programs has been affected: Employers and volunteers are harder

MICHAEL'S STORY

In April 1996, 16-year-old Michael L. was arrested for a Baltimore robbery. His trip to the city jail (juveniles arrested for robbery in Maryland are automatically charged as adults) was his first.

During his time in jail—and later in the Maryland penal system where he was imprisoned with the general population of adults—he experienced and witnessed frequent incidents of violence and sexual harassment perpetrated by adults against juveniles. He and other young men were forced to fight in "square dances" set up by facility guards; a practice later documented by Human Rights Watch in a report detailing conditions for juvenile offenders housed in Maryland's adult jails. He received little in the way of vocational or educational training, and he was sent home after 2 years. He was seen infrequently by a parole officer, and then only for urinalysis and brief check-ins. He drifted into a dead-end job in a fast-food restaurant, and he began to worry about returning to his old life.

Still, Michael was fortunate in several ways: His family was supportive, and he had been involved in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program from the age of 12. Two Big Brothers had kept up with him while he was serving time and after his release. One connected him with Amnesty International, the human rights organization, which was starting a campaign against jailing juveniles with adults. Michael went on Amnesty's lecture circuit, speaking before audiences in Minnesota; Washington, D.C.; and Oslo, Norway.

He also applied to the Job Corps program. When his application was rejected because of his criminal record, Big Brother Marc Schindler, of the Youth Law Center, and others intervened, and the Job Corps granted an exception. Michael stayed with the program, and he continues to speak out against jailing youth with adults.

Michael's story has a happy ending: Supporting a youthful offender can give positive direction to a life. But his story also is about overcoming obstacles that simply should not exist. An 18-year-old has nearly 50 years to go before retirement. To navigate that time without training or education is an opportunity wasted.

Insult is added to injury in the failure of the juvenile justice system to provide meaningful follow-up and transitional programming. The rejection of his Job Corps application was reversed only because of special intervention—hardly a resource available to most youthful ex-prisoners.

to recruit, and there is resentment about "bad" youth competing with "good" youth for jobs and employment resources.

What's more, administrators and other practitioners point out, there are structural obstacles in employment and training programs for youthful offenders. Youth corrections administrators almost unanimously report that young people with criminal records are denied entrance into their states' Job Corps programs. And by requiring federally funded job-training programs to attain high placement rates, federal regulations have established a practice of "creaming" that discourages participation by difficult-to-place applicants in the very programs from which they could benefit.

A related challenge is that many young people obtain employment through family and community networks. For many court-involved youth, the same detached communities and dysfunctional families that foster delinquency in the first place inhibit the formation of employment networks. Even when families and other support systems are there to provide, juvenile justice systems often fail to incorporate their efforts and leverage their help.

Geography

Many administrators reported that the training schools and residential programs they operate are located far from their participants' home neighborhoods. The public mandate for increased attention to security is such that young people are less able to make the transition to their home communities through furloughs, halfway houses, or independent-living arrangements. Young people are often incarcerated too far away to find jobs in their home communities or attend community-based job-training programs that match the local labor market.

Philosophy

The current philosophy that guides youth justice is definitely not about creating "clear, long term linkages into growing careers" (as Duster recommended). Punitive mandates mean youthful offenders simply "do time" or participate in community service efforts designed more to exact retribution than to promote career development. Even restorative-justice approaches can emphasize earning quick cash to repay victims instead of carefully channeling troubled young people into life-changing careers.

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In a profession increasingly conscious of high-notoriety youthful cases gone awry, insuring against one spectacular crime can sometimes come at the expense of sensible programming decisions for many. In fact, the political reality of juvenile justice is that the reward comes when public safety is protected by locking young people up. There is not much accountability for what those same offenders do after release, even if recidivism is rampant.

Creativity

Despite all the challenges, the youth corrections administrators we met with showed a commitment to the rehabilitative ethic and viewed employment and training efforts as a crucial step toward that goal. Some emphasized the importance of entrepreneurial efforts to teach young people job skills and job creativity, giving examples of enterprises operating out of their facilities in cooperation with local businesses. One spoke about the importance of interagency collaboration in creating a public–private job development board.

Today's economy provides neither the stability nor the job security enjoyed by earlier generations of American workers. Now, the most significant indicator of potential earnings and employability is lifelong access to education and skills training. Those who fail to comprehend this are the most vulnerable to dislocation and disruption. But those who can adapt to the changing workplace, acquiring new information and skills, are most likely to find continued employability and greater financial security.

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There are implications for young people. The increasingly competitive global marketplace demands the development of a highly trained and adaptable workforce. Public schools, which at one time adequately prepared vast numbers of Americans for careers in the low-skilled manufacturing jobs generated by the industrial economy, have not kept pace with the demands or the expectations of the postindustrial marketplace. The well-paying and relatively secure low-skill jobs that enabled earlier generations of marginally educated young Americans to support families, purchase homes, and raise their economic status have largely disappeared.

Many of the nation's underprepared young people face frustration and economic insecurity. Despite record-low unemployment at the beginning of the new century, many inner-city communities were still experiencing double-digit unemployment among their youth. Young people in these communities who can find work often do not have the skills they need to advance and earn family-sustaining wages. We also will need to help them develop the necessary personal attributes (soft skills) to successfully navigate economic and workplace change if they are to earn progressively higher wages.

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

Here's what we can glean from history, research, and the comments of practitioners:

- Preparing young people for economic self-sufficiency, like youth development overall, cannot happen in isolation from recognizing the other strengths and needs young people have.
- By themselves, temporary employment programs do little to reduce delinquency.
- To make the most of the capacity of employment and training programs to reduce delinquency, the numerous inherent barriers must be overcome—creatively.
- The swing in the punishment–rehabilitation pendulum toward a more punitive approach cannot be considered a positive development for the future of court-involved youth.

methodology

The field research on promising policy and program initiatives at the state and local level was based on an examination of descriptive information and qualitative data that reveal the details about program- or policy-specific conditions. NYEC used telephone interviews to develop an illustrative case study that provided examples of promising strategies.

To learn about effective programs, we contacted researchers, policymakers, funders, and practitioners to identify 30 efforts that displayed promising practices for preparing youthful offenders for successful education and work-related outcomes. That list was pared to 15 by contacting each program for more information and then critically applying the PEPNet (Promising and Effective Practices Network) criteria for effective practice.

Six of the 15 programs had received national recognition from PEPNet for their youth initiatives, and all programs were chosen based on their application of the principles reflected in the PEPNet criteria and on their demonstration of exemplary practices. The PEPNet criteria were used as a benchmark because they examine youth employment programs through the lens of youth development principles that promote positive, long-term success for at-risk youth. And although not all 15 programs have been subjected to external evaluation, their methods, service delivery and management strategies, organizational ethos and mission, and their staff and youth culture exhibit a wide array of youth development commonalities and the actualization of assets-based approaches.

As a result, PEPNet and the selected programs can act as ideal mechanisms for beginning to apply youth development principles and outcomes to the field of juvenile justice and to provide concrete models for replication elsewhere.

EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS

- Identify programs
- Visit sites
- Interview directors, staff, participants
- Synthesize information

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PEPNET

The Promising and Effective Practices Network (PEPNet), created and managed by the National Youth Employment Coalition, highlights what works, documents successes, plans improvements, gives recognition, shares information, and contributes to a database of effective practice. Policymakers use PEPNet to gain a clear picture of what a high-quality youth program looks like, thus informing policy decisions and improving their assessment and selection of youth initiatives. Funders use it to distinguish outstanding programs and help grantees increase capacity.

PEPNet's framework is based on its Criteria for Effective Practices, developed by a diverse working group of youth employment and development practitioners, researchers, employers, and policymakers. The criteria fall into five broad categories: purpose and activities, organization and management, youth development, workforce development, and evidence of success.

Initiatives that meet PEPNet's criteria are selected annually from a pool of applicants by a review board of a representative group of professionals. PEPNet has recognized 61 exemplary initiatives in the United States and Canada, including those that work specifically with court-involved youth.

Information about PEPNet's many resources is available from www.nyec.org/pepnet, by calling 202-659-1064, or by sending a fax request to 202-659-0399.

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Site visits involved a four-step process. First was a tour of grounds and facilities to get a detailed picture what services were offered, how they were delivered, and whether the environment was supportive to participants and conducive to the learning process.

Second, we conducted an extensive interview with each site director. This conversation explored the philosophy and driving focus of the program's educational and employment efforts; elicited specific information about what kind of academic instruction, vocational training, and support services the program delivered; and examined how programs accomplished the goal of imparting skills and services. The interviews also covered staff development, outcome measures, accountability, and other features unique to the program. We also collected performance data on each organization to quantify success at minimizing reincarceration and providing positive educational and employment outcomes.

Third, we interviewed staff members to gain their perspective on the organization and its effectiveness. These interviews explored more fully the various facets of the program to determine whether staff members felt they were integral to the program's mission, believed they were empowered to strive for its successful attainment, and seemed truly dedicated to the improvement of the lives of at-risk youth.

Finally, we interviewed program participants to get a sense of whether their expectations, experiences, and outcomes matched the observations staff and program directors.

After the visits, we prepared a short report on each site to describe programs, identify the population served and the point in the juvenile justice continuum at which it intervened, list outcome data, and, most important, define exemplary practices. Synthesis of the reports revealed commonalties among programs that appear to enable them to better serve court-involved juveniles' educational

POLICY INITIATIVES

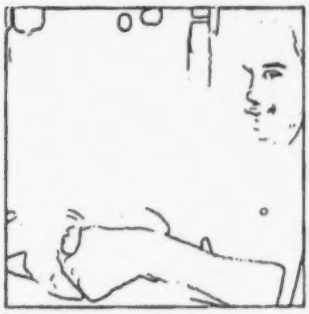
- Survey field to identify initiatives
- Survey experts and gather data
- Synthesize information

and vocational needs. The Program Profiles section of this toolkit presents that information.

Sampling of policy initiatives had two parts. First, national experts in the juvenile justice and workforce development systems, including policymakers, researchers, and representatives from national organizations, were contacted by telephone and through a mail survey of members of the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators.

Respondents were asked structured survey questions about funding, outcome measures, and other basic information for policy initiatives they believed had promise. NYEC compared respondents' suggestions with criteria set forth by NYEC and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. A group of promising policies and initiatives was chosen, and a second, in-depth telephone survey was conducted of the policymakers and initiative administrators who were instrumental in developing or implementing them.

That survey focused on five key areas: collaboration among systems or between systems and the private sector; policy and system flexibility; youth development; innovative approaches; and funding, support, and replication. The findings and descriptions are included in the Policy Profiles section of the toolkit.



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programs and policies

There have been few systematic efforts to identify the key elements of programs that prepare court-involved young people for economic self-sufficiency. Public and private institutions usually focus on prevention and on crisis intervention to mitigate the costs to society of juvenile crime and delinquency, rather than exploring how to more effectively habilitate, rehabilitate, and reintegrate these young offenders so they can become productive members of society.

SUCCESS DEFINED

In contrast to much of juvenile justice programming, the 15 programs highlighted in the toolkit operate under comprehensive principles that view young adults and their needs holistically. The programs apply an assets-based approach instead of focusing on their participants' perceived deficits. They demonstrate that youth development principles can be applied to the field of juvenile justice, because those principles support the bottom-line outcomes that practitioners, administrators, and policymakers in both fields must produce. Whether we as a society want to be tough on crime or not, the recent history of juvenile justice has demonstrated that building more prisons, placing more young people in adult facilities, and imposing more punitive sanctions is not working.

Each program has found ways to advance youth development principles despite the limits imposed on organizations that serve juvenile offender populations. And the fact that they all have recidivism rates below 20 percent raises some questions: Is it more cost effective and "tough on crime" to place young people in a juvenile correctional institution or in a program like the ones we found? Which alternative is in the best interests of the community? Which best serves the needs of the individual? Perhaps by shying away from infusing youth development into the work of juvenile justice, we have confused being tough on crime with being tough on criminals, and in the process we have contributed to the crippling of a generation of largely minority young people.

Commitment to Rehabilitation

Successful programs are committed to the development and achievement of young adults; that's obvious. But the reality is that many youth-serving organizations neither exhibit a clear sense of purpose nor have a firm dedication to a stated mission. In contrast, despite the difficult population they serve, the 15 youth-serving projects are more rehabilitation projects than disciplinary programs, resources rather than crutches, intent on empowering young offenders rather than taking control and running their lives.

PROGRAM PROFILES

Avon Park Youth Academy, Avon Park, Florida, private residential adjudication for 16- to 18-year-old male offenders

Career Exploration Project, New York City, alternative sentencing for first-time felony offenders aged 15–17

Corrections Clearinghouse, Olympia, Washington, workforce development for adjudicated juvenile and adult offenders

Crispus Attucks YouthBuild, York, Pennsylvania, workforce development charter school with a building trades emphasis

CUNY Catch, Brooklyn, New York, transitional programming for juveniles leaving the Rikers Island penal institution

Dayton YouthBuild, Dayton, Ohio, workforce development charter school with a building trades emphasis.

Ferris School for Boys, Wilmington, Delaware, residential adjudication of boys aged 13–18

Fresh Start, Baltimore, Maryland, education and vocational training for offenders aged 16–20

Friends of Island Academy, New York City, private, nonprofit, voluntary transitional programming for ex-offenders aged 10–21

Gulf Coast Trades Center, New Waverly, Texas, residential adjudication of offenders aged 16–19

Mayor's Juvenile Justice Action Plan, San Francisco, six programs for at-risk youth and chronic offenders aged 10–18

Omega Boys Club, San Francisco, violence prevention project for young adults

Project RIO–Y (Re-Integration of Offenders–Youth), Austin, Texas, voluntary workforce development for incarcerated young people aged 16–21

Tampa Marine Institute, Tampa, Florida, private, nonprofit, nonresidential adjudication of offenders aged 14–18

T-CAP North, Fort Worth, Texas, alternative sentencing for offenders aged 10–17

Continuum of Care

Most generally follow a wraparound model of services in a continuum of youth development activities so young people become productive citizens who contribute, rather than detract, from the safety of the community. They teach self-sufficiency to young adults who can take responsibility for their own growth and development and for progressing toward educational, vocational, and personal success. Wraparound service models—assets-based approaches—provide holistic education and support, and they work in collaboration with other service providers and often the community itself to develop young people's talents, skills, and current resources as a way to ameliorate their weaknesses.

An organization's commitment to the rehabilitation of young offenders must go beyond mission statements to encompass the way staff, and the program itself, view the participants. Juvenile correctional facilities must balance security and discipline with the freedom young people need to pursue high-quality educational and career opportunities. So there is a conundrum: How do you "modify" behavior when young offenders often do not respond to traditional instruction or support? How do you empower a population that has used its own power in violence and destruction?

Successful programs use preventive care, assessment, and intervention to meet the various needs of different populations. All of that is important, but the most fundamental parts of a continuum of care are the postprogram supports and services, because young offenders have needs that go beyond quick fixes or single cures. Individualized treatment plans can target specific weaknesses, needs, and strengths and help reinforce the skills and beliefs needed long after graduating from a program or leaving an institution. Without help in making the transition to gainful employment, job training can be a waste of time. There is no point offering academic instruction if there is no support for finishing high school or preparing for college.

WHAT DO THEY HAVE IN COMMON?

- Commitment to rehabilitation
- Continuum of care
- Integrated education
- System collaboration
- Support structures
- Accountability

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MARC'S STORY

It has been said that the measure of a man's life is not where is he is now but how far he has come from where he started. By any set of standards, Marc Washington has traveled a long way.

Marc was born into poverty in South Jamaica, Queens, one of New York City's poorest neighborhoods. As an adolescent, he became intimate with the streets. His brother and best friend were killed in drug-related shootings. Without viable options for his future, without hope in the promise of a life worth living, Marc was trapped in an endless, hopeless cycle of violence. He was quoted in a New York *Times* article: "We all have one or two defining moments in our lives. Mine came running across a rooftop with a gun pointed at my back. Something inside me snapped, and at that point I knew I didn't want to die."

Marc was arrested in 1993 on drug charges and spent six months on Rikers Island, New York City's largest prison. When he left, Marc found help through Friends of Island Academy (FOIA), which works with students enrolled in Rikers Island's high schools. FOIA's staff members believed Marc could succeed, and they challenged him to extend himself to obtain his goals. He finished high school, received college preparatory assistance, and was trained in the soft skills he deeded to prepare himself for the world of work.

After he left Rikers, he stayed with the program. Marc got a job as a janitor and then worked at a clothing store, eventually becoming assistant manager. He also worked with FOIA's GIIFT Pack, a group that does counseling and outreach in New York City high schools. He enrolled in John Jay College in New York City, and he graduated with a B.A. in government. He won the Robin Hood Foundation's John F. Kennedy Hero Award. He plans to attend law school.

Marc has not achieved all of his goals, but he has managed to do something that few individuals can, regardless of life circumstances: He transcended his environment to provide a life for himself better than the one to which he was born. How? Through his own will, his own skills and determination, and through the support and guidance of FOIA.

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Postprogram supports allow young people to continue making progress, they provide a mechanism for organizations to follow up successes, and they form a structure from which to gather data about program outcomes. High-quality postprogram efforts are sustained for at least one year and use a combination of passive and active approaches that allow young people open access to services and counseling; keep them connected with other "alumni" from the program; and offer direct and concrete assistance in getting and keeping jobs, progressing up the economic ladder, continuing their education, and living independently.

Integrated Education

Education is the gateway to economic self-sufficiency. Wraparound service models incorporate holistic educational curricula designed to lead young offenders away from the antiachievement culture and the learning deficits so many of them have toward what they need to succeed in the workplace. It is only recently that youth programs have begun to promote academic credentials as the ticket to viable, long-term economic opportunity. Education is the best plan for economic success. A high school graduate will earn $420,000 more over a lifetime than will a dropout. A college graduate will earn a million more.

At the same time, the school-to-work movement in public and alternative education systems has demonstrated that economic self-sufficiency requires not just academic credentials, but hard skills (field-specific expertise), soft skills (preemployment skills and appropriate workplace attitudes and habits), and work-based experience. A diploma is useless to someone who cannot construct a proper résumé, speak effectively in an interview, or acclimate to the workplace.

All of the programs highlighted emphasize workforce training through curricula that are relevant, engaging, and practical: Fresh Start's chair and boat production operations simulate the real-world working environment. YouthBuild participants acquire appropriate workplace skills and gain building trades certification as they construct low-income housing.

Another important program element is an effort to connect vocational training with the demands of an ever-changing economy. Several of the programs collaborate with employers to help shape their curricula to ensure responsiveness. The Corrections Clearinghouse connects youth offenders with computer training and repair workshops, Avon Park Youth Academy and the Tampa Marine Institute (TMI) educate participants in the application of various kinds of computer software, and Dayton YouthBuild contracts with local technology firms to provide training and employment opportunities.

LEGITIMIZING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: A CATCH-22

Regardless of effectiveness, youth service providers are caught in a bind. The debate over punishment versus reform has swung away from reform and rehabilitation and toward protecting public safety by punishing criminals. Youth service programs have seen their funding cut and are being challenged to do more with less and to provide high-quality outcomes with a minimum of resources. To secure additional funding and resources, youth organizations must legitimize their work through concrete outcome data for recidivism rates, academic achievement, successful employment, and other positive long-term effects. But without funding, how can the programs develop and implement the systems they need to track results in the first place?

To be truly effective, youth service providers need to find a way to move beyond this debilitating cycle. How? Perhaps the key is in the programs' not allowing themselves to be subject to the whim of a single entity, institution, or government body. It is no coincidence that most organizations that offer diverse, high-quality programming also have diverse funding streams and have acquired the expertise necessary to use a variety of mechanisms and sources to leverage additional funds. Unfortunately, the reality is that providers who serve a criminal population must do more than just serve young adults. They must become experts in the economics of youth policy and youth development. And youth development initiatives that do not depend on a single funding source will be more stable, more successful in service delivery, and more likely to secure the resources necessary to track their success. Success breeds more success, but it is also true that success breeds additional funding.

Finally, the programs recognize that workforce development is an important medium for connecting young people with positive adult role models. Many of the programs, such as the Career Exploration Project (CexP), train young people for the workplace and then provide internships with business owners who can act first as supervisors and mentors and later as job references.

Effective youth programs equip participants with a variety of life skills for coping with their daily problems and the emotional and mental challenges of school and work. For instance, the Omega Boys Club is a violence prevention effort that trains young people, through a variety of media, to avoid violence and consciously and actively control the course of their own lives. Friends of Island Academy uses peer leadership to educate high school students about the dangers of life in the streets and how to harness their own experiences for a positive purpose. Those programs challenge young offenders to be responsible for their own growth and development and equip them with the mental, emotional, and social skills they need to become productive adults.

Although working toward academic progress is important, successful programs also demonstrate that some elements of instruction are common to all forms of effective education and skills training. Effective programs use a student-centered approach, allowing participants to participate. That means they cooperate in discussions, ask questions, do group work, learn from one another, and shape the content of their learning objectives.

High-quality juvenile justice programs also individualize instruction as much as possible. Staff members work to develop individualized learning plans based on young persons' strengths, weaknesses, needs, and desires, and they encourage participants to refine and improve their plans. Innovative software, such as the New Century program (used by the Avon Park Youth Academy and TMI), creates individual, need-specific educational curricula. One-on-one instruction, tutoring, mentoring, and counseling also are important to most programs, as is specific instruction for students with physical, mental, or learning disabilities. Most of the programs have special facilities for challenged students and employ special education instructors.

Successful initiatives attempt to engage the learner. Whether through entrepreneurial activities, multimedia technology, urban youth culture media, real-world experience, or a system of rewards and incentives, success results when participants are involved in their own education.

The exemplary programs do not simply provide academic, vocational, or life skills training. They attempt to prepare

ENTREPRENEURSHIP: INVESTING YOUTH IN THEIR OWN DEVELOPMENT

Many young people, especially traditionally underserved youth, suffer from a perceived lack of significance. They do not believe they can change their personal circumstances, let alone their neighborhoods, schools, or workplaces. They have neither the hope nor the confidence they need to move ahead.

One mechanism that has proven overwhelmingly successful in combating these feelings of powerlessness is affording young people a chance to become entrepreneurs. Fresh Start's practical work-based experience includes a strict attendance policy and standards for workplace behavior, but it also allows participants to take total responsibility—and have complete accountability—for their work. The participants run every aspect of a chair production business and a boat-building company, and their daily assignments include construction, developing advertising materials, producing financial statements, and more. There is a different foreman each day, and all company profits are divided based on work performance and the demonstration of appropriate workforce behaviors in a given week.

Participants learn the value of skill development and the demands of the workplace. They learn that all of them are important to the business; they have a chance to produce real change and concrete results. The obvious benefit is in the paycheck, but participants also learn confidence and earn respect as valuable employees of a company.

participants for employment through educational models that successfully integrate these various forms of education. As the service-learning movement has shown, all students learn best when they are challenged to make the connections between the various aspects of their educational experience, when they can relate what they learn to the real world, and when they can reflect with authentic insight about the nature of their experiences.

It is not enough for young offenders to gain literacy; they must develop the technological skills required to succeed in the global economy. It's not sufficient for young people to know how to operate machinery; they must be able to fill out a job application and compose a résumé. It's not adequate for young people to have all of those academic and vocational skills; they need to learn to channel their emotions into productive endeavors.

Collaboration

Successful programs not only offer a wide range of services, they also recognize what they cannot offer. Effective programs collaborate and form connections with other agencies: employers, law enforcement agencies, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, psychologists, hospitals, family-planning agencies, and social services. The key is that those programs do not allow participants to fail simply because their own resources or areas of expertise are inadequate to meet all needs. Often, participants receive or are referred to all services through a single point of contact—a case manager. This allows for expedient assessment, intervention, and coordination among an array of service providers. More specific forms of collaboration come in the development of formal connections with employers for internships, apprenticeships, and job placement and with social services agencies for the administrative needs of ex-offenders (foster care placements or transitions, Social Security cards, drivers' licenses, health insurance).

Support Structures

Effective services, regardless of mission, connect youthful offenders with a support network that is consistent, compassionate, and challenging in its efforts to motivate and counsel young adults toward success. Many youthful offenders suffer most from a lack of connection with caring adults that can lead to emotional problems, such as depression and poor anger management skills, all of which can emerge as roadblocks to positive development.

Mentoring and counseling programs can offer young people the one-on-one attention they crave and can be the most powerful mechanisms for reinforcing a program's educational philosophy. Most of us find it difficult to accept advice from people we do not trust and that is

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TRANSITIONAL CARE: CATCHING YOUNG OFFENDERS BEFORE THEY RETURN TO CRIME

The City University of New York (CUNY) Catch program demonstrates the importance and the efficacy of an established transition program. CUNY Catch has educational and vocational services available at three college campuses for juveniles leaving incarceration at New York City's Rikers Island. To ensure that young people know about the program, CUNY Catch starts at Rikers, where most at offenders will begin the transition back home. Like most young offenders, when Rikers inmates return home they face the same personal, familial, and institutional barriers to success that blocked their progress in the first place. Even for those with skills training, the lack of vision for the future and insufficient educational and employment opportunities on the outside can lead right back to the institution.

CUNY Catch offers motivational and informational seminars and workshops for juveniles while they are still at Rikers. Everyone gets a card advertising the program's services, and CUNY Catch staff members make appointments with inmates in the days before they leave the facility. The young people generally are receptive because Catch offers hope and possibilities that institutional rules and restrictions cannot provide. Perhaps the greatest testimony is that many young offenders will, after serving time in another facility, return to CUNY Catch—some of them years after first receiving a card.

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antithetical to our norms of behavior. Successful mentoring programs recognize that young people are more likely to thrive where they are connected to like-minded adults and peers with whom to develop lasting, meaningful relationships.

The Ferris School for Boys helps adjudicated juvenile delinquents overcome their problems primarily through the HOSTS (Help One Student To Succeed) mentoring program. HOSTs mentors are trained in nationally standardized curricula that encompass academic, social, and life skills training. They meet with students at least one hour each week for a commitment of no less than six weeks.

Accountability

Successful programs are not content merely to develop and implement the principles mentioned thus far; they constantly challenge their own success and search for new ways to improve. High-quality youth-serving organizations recognize the extraordinary needs of our young people and are committed to holding themselves and their programs accountable. Indeed, many of the sites conduct monthly or even weekly assessments that include graduation competency tests, school retention rates, and rigorous tracking of recidivism. All of the programs highlighted are exemplary not simply because their practices are ideologically sound but because they have developed case management systems to track their program participants and to produce tangible, measurable results.

Few programs have the time or resources to contract with outside research groups to perform independent evaluations. They have found that the best way to measure program success is to rank the desired outcomes and then find a relevant standard against which to evaluate the

effort. Juvenile justice practitioners consider recidivism a key measure of how well a program is providing for the safety and stability of the community and the rehabilitation of the individual. Youth development focuses on the transition to productive citizenship and adulthood. Most of the 15 programs measure success both ways, first by tracking rearrest and reincarceration rates and subsequently by tracking school retention and advancement and the rate and duration of employment.

The average juvenile justice institution has a recidivism rate between 50 percent and 70 percent. TMI, Gulf Coast Trades Center, Fresh Start, and Friends of Island Academy all have recidivism rates below 20 percent. Crispus Attucks YouthBuild has a 5 percent recidivism rate among the 74 percent of the participants previously involved with the juvenile justice system; three-quarters of all participants are employed after graduation. Almost 90 percent of participants in Dayton YouthBuild are employed or in school after graduation. Avon Park Youth Academy has a 78 percent rate of successful program completion; 40 percent of participants earn a GED or high school diploma, 78 percent receive vocational certification, and 81 percent are still employed after 6 months. Eighty percent of Project RIO–Y's (Re-Integration of Offenders–Youth) graduates are engaged in a "constructive activity": part-time employment, school enrollment, or vocational training. All CExP graduates pursue further education, and two-thirds of them proceed to other internships or jobs; half of those young adults continue to work 6 months after completing the program.

Our society can no longer afford to consider services for juvenile offenders solely in the dichotomy of punishment or altruism. As a new generation of young adults becomes responsible for the nation's health and wealth, it is in our best interest to take seriously the work of providing high-quality educational and vocational programs for youthful offenders.

There are successful programs that help juvenile offenders and at-risk young people achieve on a high level. Locking kids up is not the answer to their problems any more than it relieves the problems they pose to society. It is equally unproductive to throw money at juvenile offenders—even by creating programs—if those efforts are no more than a flurry of unconnected, unconsidered actions.

Youth service policymakers and providers must engage in a goal-directed examination of why some of the young people who have been served have still failed, how those young people can best be reached, and what is required for their success above and beyond their time in a structured environment.

The programs in the toolkit are not perfect—few of them exhibit strength in all the principles outlined in this overview. But they are models for finding ways to answer some of our questions, for creating a network and resource base of effective practices and programs, and for starting to prove that "nothing works" is simply an excuse used by those who are not truly dedicated to finding solutions.

TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

We examined programs that are exemplary; yet even within that group, some elements stand out as exceptional. Closer examination illuminates what it takes for success, and it can highlight the specific methods of empowering young adults that are lacking in many youth organizations.

Learning: A Multidisciplinary Approach

The Life Learning Academy in San Francisco, which is part of the Mayor's Juvenile Justice Action Plan, focuses its curriculum on project-based learning. Students major in one of the four elements: earth, wind, water, and fire. Water majors study oceanography and marine biology, learn boat repair and sailing, take swimming and scuba lessons, visit aquariums and marine biology labs, and work closely with the local harbormaster and the Maritime Museum. Students learn the subject matter and gain useful skills, but more important, they physically experience the relevance of the material they study.

The best programs have participants conduct primary research, manage projects, run their own businesses, form student governments, and help to shape curricula. Those activities are powerful motivators to develop self-confidence and the inner resolve necessary for success.

Incentives and Rewards: Positive, not Punitive

Crispus Attucks YouthBuild and Fresh Start use wages as an incentive and reward. At Crispus Attucks, students are paid stipends both for academic work and for construction site training, and the amount of money they earn is based on weekly evaluations of their effort, attitude, and improvements in performance. The largest monthly paycheck is $750—so the money clearly is not a living wage—but it is an effective reinforcement tool. Participants are given weekly indicators of how well they are doing, and they are forced to confront their performance in a tangible way.

Similarly, at Fresh Start, the profits from two enterprises are divided among the workers, although the not everyone receives the same amount. Money is distributed based on a weekly point system that considers work performance,

cooperation, motivation, professionalism, and ability to stay on task.

These creative uses of wages demonstrate how external devices can be used to evaluate and reward promising participants. Often, young offenders grow up in environments that are unstable and with adults who are undependable, so there is little systematic recognition or reward for a job well done. Youth service providers should have a tangible, relevant means of reinforcing positive behaviors (rather than only punishing negative ones), thus creating a fixed, dependable set of expectations that sometimes will even exert a healthy form of peer pressure.

WHAT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE?

- Multidisciplinary learning
- Incentives, not punishment
- Peer leadership
- Staff development
- Youth culture

Peer Leadership: Powerful Role Modeling

Juvenile offenders often are victims of a system of bad advice, bad information, and bad role models—all of which serve to reinforce bad behavior. They can come to believe that the only way to receive attention or control over their lives is through behavior that is destructive, violent, or both. A youth program can offer the world's best educational and vocational services, but if the peer culture doesn't support it, no one will take advantage of the offerings. What's more, young people who struggle to do better but who find themselves ostracized by peers cannot develop the support systems that are so instrumental to success.

Friends of Island Academy attempts to break this cycle through the GIIFT Pack (Guys and Girls Insight on Imprisonment for Teens), which engages young people with their peers in group leadership activities that focus on the development of positive beliefs, values, and behaviors. GIIFT Pack participants share their experiences with at-risk young people in schools and community-based organizations to teach them how to distance themselves from the beliefs and behaviors that prevent success. The program reaches about 2000 young people a year, and participants have been incorporated as permanent members of the guidance offices of two South Bronx high schools.

GIIFT Pack participants reap the obvious rewards of developing interpersonal, communication, and organizing skills, and they achieve a sense of empowerment. The group-based nature of the project allows young people to support one another in their leadership roles and to provide a powerful mechanism of positive reinforcement. The benefits carry over to other areas of life as well, laying the groundwork for positive relationships that will support future endeavors and helping participants become familiar with a culture of success.

Staff: A Guiding Philosophy

The directors of CExP and TMI take a goal-directed approach to staff development. CExP staff members are taught service provision through mandatory training that extends over 20 hours and includes conflict management and family-based intervention techniques. CExP also recruits graduates of the project because of their unique perspective and knowledge—and for their compassion—which participants find immensely valuable.

TMI staff members receive up to 80 hours of orientation and training focused on helping them to offer counsel and support that is effective and caring. Every staff member at TMI acts as an advisor for a group of young people. TMI tries to ensure that the staff make-up is ethnically diverse, but that a range of styles and approaches is available (disciplinarians, friends, counselors). Every participant should be able to connect with at least one staff member and develop a long-lasting relationship with a positive adult role model. All staff members have personal development plans to improve their service capacity and performance. They receive monthly training, and they meet each day to discuss their work.

Psychology and Youth Culture

The Omega Boys' Club stands apart from most youth service organizations in that it its efforts are not directed mainly at education or workforce development. Omega's programming is grounded in one simple belief: Young people cannot succeed at work or at school until they are psychologically prepared to meet the challenges of those experiences. Omega has developed a life prescription that attacks self-limiting belief structures and teaches new rules to live by that will help young people "stay alive and free."

Omega's psychological assessments and interventions are powerful because they meet youth "where they are." Most juvenile offenders are not socialized through home, school, or faith-based organizations so much as they are by popular culture, the media and entertainment industries, and, most powerfully, by peers whose focus is often antithetical to productive citizenship. Omega's efforts are directed at challenging young offenders to examine the

cultural norms that lead to success and then using positive, relevant frameworks to empower them to survive on their own, regardless of external influences. The Omega program is not based on the reward–punishment dichotomy; it is grounded in personal motivation.

POLICY INITIATIVES THAT WORK

The programs highlighted in the toolkit are the efforts of the entrepreneurial, the committed, the creative, and the determined to find and implement ways to rescue juvenile offenders and at-risk youth—often despite public policy. All too often, these innovators assert, public policy is a major barrier to, rather than an enabler of, good programming. Until public policy promotes the development of collaborative, comprehensive, innovative programs, there will be no attaining the goal of reaching the largest possible number of young offenders. If we are to move beyond islands of excellence in seas of mediocrity, public policy must acknowledge, advance, build, and sustain environments that promote effective practice.

Nevertheless, the set of practices and principles distilled from those programs can inform the work of state and local policymakers challenged with preparing juvenile offenders for self-sufficiency and productive citizenship. As agencies and policymakers search for the most effective means to promote strategies that work, promising approaches can emerge from policy strategies that, even in the broadest sense, provide flexibility in workforce and juvenile justice systems.

Many of the 19 policies profiled in the toolkit cross categories and definitions: System collaboration can be innovative, and it can result in system reform as it uses new ways to spend available money. And not all of them meet criteria for what youth development experts consider "best practices." In fact, many are known in the field for their struggles and challenges. Some of them do not address employment per se, but rather speak to initiatives that promote broad-based system reform. The rationale for their inclusion is to demonstrate how those initiatives

POLICY PROFILES

- Innovative approaches
- Funding allocations and resource development
- System collaboration
- System flexibility and reform
- Youth development

POLICY PROFILES

Innovative Approaches

Florida Business Partners for Juvenile Justice Inc., Tallahassee, Florida, prevention to aftercare for at-risk youth and juvenile offenders

ExplorNet and North Carolina Office of Juvenile Justice, Raleigh, North Carolina, computer repair training for incarcerated youth

Juvenile Justice Accountability Board, Tallahassee, Florida, outcomes evaluation for youth in commitment facilities

Jobs for Maine's Graduates, Farmingdale, Maine, career development for incarcerated youth

Oregon Market-Demand-Driven Programming, Eugene, Oregon, labor-market-based transitional programming for incarcerated youth

Funding Allocations and Resource Development

TANF Funds for Juvenile Probation, Sacramento, California, funding for welfare prevention for youth on probation

Occupational Therapy Training Program, San Francisco, California, assessment and training in alternative schools

Juvenile Welfare Board, Pinellas County, Florida, special taxing district to fund youth and family programs

Job Readiness/Work Experience Program, Jefferson City, Missouri, job-training placement for youthful offenders

Use of OJJDP Formula Funds, Minnesota Community Reintegration, St. Paul, Minnesota, grantmaking for jobs programs serving at-risk youth and juvenile offenders

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System Collaboration

Comprehensive Strategy for Youth, Family and Community, San Diego County, California, prevention through aftercare for at-risk youth and juvenile offenders

JustWork, Omaha, Nebraska, experiential training for low- to moderate-risk youth

Job Corps Agreement, Rensselaer, New York, enrollment of juvenile offenders in the Job Corps

Division of Civilian Conservation, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Columbus, Ohio, transitional programming for juvenile ex-offenders

SafeFutures, Contra Costa, Martinez, California, residential to aftercare programming for gang members

Youth Industries Program, Columbia, South Carolina, restorative justice and trade training for incarcerated youth

System Flexibility and Reform

RECLAIM Ohio, Columbus, Ohio, redistribution of funds for alternative sentencing

Neighborhood Conference Committees, Austin, Texas, informal resolution of minor legal problems

Youth Development

Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development, Des Moines, Iowa, coordination and alignment of the state's youth policies and programs

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overcome barriers, confront controversy, and improve their operations. The policy profiles demonstrate how systems improve their services, and that goes beyond simply assessing where the best employment programs are found.

In addition to their approaches, policies also can be understood by their genesis. Most of the initiatives were created one of three ways: by state legislation in response to a focusing event (often a crisis that captured public attention, prompted outrage, and resulted in demand for change); as partnerships based on the work of a policy community or a "policy entrepreneur," who spearheaded the idea; or as innovative approaches and creative uses of funding to meet a perceived community need. Knowing how to initiate major system change or push for legislation is just the first step, following through with a common language, creating partnerships as needed (even among the reluctant), and securing funding were major challenges to most of the agencies involved.

Innovative Approaches

New approaches to combating crime and promoting self-sufficiency can originate at any point and from anyone. In fact, they are more likely to come from someone with a vision—a policy entrepreneur—or as a way to meet a perceived need than they are to originate in traditional policy arenas. Often, a need is identified by a few creative thinkers who turn research or ideas into action.

Labor markets are regional and local. Although it is easy to see that the economy has shifted from industrial to informational, specific employment opportunities depend on the local and regional economy. Market-demand-driven programming in Oregon allows the juvenile justice system to use current labor market information for vocational planning. The University of Oregon and Oregon's workforce development system use labor market predictions to guide program development for young people in the juvenile justice system. This process assists transition specialists who work with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation developing appropriate job-training programs and finding jobs for juvenile ex-offenders returning home. Information comes from many places, most notably from the business community, whose members also weigh in on the specific training they want to see in the workforce. And because the program is set up to work with one young person at a time, unique interests, needs, and abilities can be put to the best use in the workforce.

When program development is guided by local labor markets it's a simpler matter to match supply with demand. The initiators of the Oregon effort understood

that geographic mismatches are common. It's bad policy to return ex-offenders to communities where the jobs for which they are trained do not exist.

Funding Allocations and Resource Development

Where there is interest in starting a new program or affecting public policy there will be the question of funding. Any number of systems and agencies are developing creative partnerships and avenues to tap into funding streams that have not often been used to support juvenile justice programming.

A California program uses federal TANF funds (TANF is the successor to AFDC, Aid to Families with Dependent Children) to keep juvenile offenders and at-risk youth off welfare. Many states have accumulated large TANF surpluses because of mandatory reductions in welfare caseloads. That money can be used for a wide array of services for low-income youth, including those in families who do not receive cash assistance. The state's Comprehensive Youth Services Act authorizes county juvenile probation departments to use the money for prevention programs. The Department of Social Services provides block grants to county juvenile probation departments. Each department determines which local prevention and intervention programs it wants to support.

In one case, San Francisco's juvenile probation department issued a request for proposals so that community agencies could apply under a number of funding categories, including family-focused and youth employment programs. One group that answered the call was the city's Occupational Therapy Training Program, which serves students in alternative secondary schools.

Creating effective legislation is one step to making the best use of the money available. If that can be combined with flexible RFPs that allow communities to provide high-quality services, funded agencies can sustain their efforts, even when funding streams are outside the traditional juvenile justice system.

System Collaboration

The next step after formulating a policy is implementing it. The simple problems of systems not connecting or practitioners not understanding one another can erect barriers to collaboration between the juvenile justice and workforce development systems. And collaboration does not always work: Some partnerships never seem to evolve into productive initiatives.

There are places, however, where a shared vision is being pursued successfully and where systems converge. Some common themes can be drawn from the experiences of these initiatives: The larger the number of players, the more attention the collaboration receives. The increased scrutiny often leads to more partnerships, more funding, or more recognition from other states or agencies. The best news is that, where there are fewer barriers to system collaboration, more court-involved youth can be served outside of crowded institutions.

The three most common reasons for success are deceptively simple. First, the need for funding is an excellent incentive. Even among well-funded state systems, needs arise that encourage collaboration to allocate money differently or to work around bureaucracies or other barriers. Budget

development is generally an annual event that calls for constant evaluation and reappraisal. Agencies that demonstrate continuous innovation and that react to new public priorities more readily justify budgetary demands than do those that appear resistant to change.

Second, and perhaps more important, are common vision and shared language. The partnerships that make time for discussion and exert the effort to educate one another form effective working relationships and generally maintain efficient joint operations.

Finally, partnerships that either avoid or confront territorialism often surpass initial barriers and build healthy collaborations. This is not always easy, and it requires a significant investment of time and energy. Staff turnover often is initially high in these situations, but partnerships that refuse to give up can ultimately form sustainable efforts.

JustWork is a joint program of the Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation Department and the Office of Juvenile Services, which is in the state's department of Health and Human Services. It offers experiential employment training to Omaha-area young people, ages 14–19, who are involved in the juvenile justice system. Before this initiative, the Vocational Rehabilitation Department had not worked with court-involved youth; its focus had been on serving adults with disabilities. Its mandate fits easily with the program, however, because so many court-involved young people also have been diagnosed with learning disabilities. To promote communication and cooperation, staff from both agencies were assigned to the same location.

Finding unlikely partners paid off for JustWork's efforts with young people who might be passed over for employment because of their disabilities. The partnership worked in part because each group was willing to learn the language of the other system. Rather than seeing a barrier in the Vocational Rehabilitation system's traditional focus on adults, the agencies formed a partnership outside traditional territories. The practical results are found in reduced numbers of young people held in training schools and crowded juvenile institutions.

System Flexibility and Reform

Systemic change also results from deliberate action. Juvenile justice policies usually fall into the category of regulation—policies aimed at altering or controlling the behavior of individuals or groups. Policy initiatives sometimes step outside the usual methods of criminal justice—notably incarceration—to focus instead on programmatic or systemwide changes that support positive workforce

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development approaches. Ultimately, those reform efforts have the same goal as any other juvenile justice policy: to reduce recidivism.

One often-intractable barrier to system reform is the uneven distribution of juvenile justice budgets in favor of residential facilities. By providing alternatives to commitment, RECLAIM (Reasoned and Equitable Community and Local Alternatives to the Incarceration of Minors) Ohio reduces overcrowding in the state's juvenile corrections institutions, gives local officials more discretion in the allocation of scarce juvenile justice dollars, and allows judges to impose sentences that fit the needs of the community and the offender. It also gives judges the authority to purchase state commitment for offenders who require residential placement or secure confinement. During its first year, RECLAIM Ohio provided juvenile court judges with just under $18 million to serve more than 8600 young people in community programs. The number of institutional commitments dropped, despite an increase in the number of felony adjudications.

Youth Development

Youth development initiatives build on a range of competencies that complement young people's connections to their communities. Although employment issues are important for young people in their teens and early twenties, youth development can be viewed as a continuous process that promotes and strengthens the entire person. It involves young people and adults in schools, families, communities, and even the juvenile justice system. Many policy initiatives are geared toward vocational training or employment, but those that build human and social capital are highlighted as youth development initiatives.

Unlike systemic reform initiatives, youth development projects can be implemented without any type of formal policy, and those projects often serve more than court-involved youth. Although the projects can result from funding opportunities, as seen in the system collaboration initiatives, one factor for success is a shared vision. Youth development encompasses a philosophy that spills over into numerous systems that serve young people, no matter what the ultimate goal is of each. Such an approach allows for instant collaboration at the implementation level.

The Youth Development State Collaboration project, originally a demonstration in a few communities in Iowa, now extends statewide. The effort began when a group of service providers learned about a federal grant program to overcome the fragmentation that had ruled individual systems. More than 30 partners convened, all with different missions, to agree on one objective: youth development.

The Iowa collaboration is working to replace the state's splintered, deficit-driven youth policies and programs with a coordinated youth development approach and to build the capacity of local communities to provide high-quality youth services. The Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning coordinates the project, but the effort involves many Iowa state agencies, local service providers, and young people themselves.

Forming a common mission, in this case youth development, helps to secure funding. When broad-scale collaborations are the goal, the challenge is to contend with multiple partners and agencies and the corresponding competing interests. Iowa's initiative is still fairly new, but its partners have made rapid progress in shaping a shared vision. One way was to develop common definitions that apply across systems. Those from the workforce development system are learning juvenile justice terminology in Iowa, and the juvenile service providers are acquiring knowledge of the workforce development system.

WHAT TO DO

- Find a common vision and language
- Form partnerships
- Look for nontraditional funding
- Seek or create broad RFPs
- Avoid the status quo
- Avoid territorialism
- Overcome barriers
- Encourage policy entrepreneurs
- Use data
- Address geographic mismatch
- Learn from events
- Expect unintended consequences

PRACTICE MAKES POLICY

The juvenile justice system historically has been relatively inflexible and thus at odds with youth development principles. The goal in developing the policy profiles section of the toolkit was to find places where the juvenile justice system acts outside the status quo and where flexibility and positive youth development were primary objectives. Although each initiative is not designated in

whole as a "best practice," each is working on some piece of the puzzle to improve services for court-involved youth.

For the better part, the initiatives had in common the willingness to look past existing barriers and get started. The 19 policies show that the juvenile justice system and its decision makers can be flexible. They encouraged partnerships, innovation, and ideas promoting youth development, although the successful initiatives were not always motivated by the policymakers themselves. Often, a juvenile justice or workforce development official, or even a business leader, overcame existing bureaucratic challenges to influence policy decisions. Hard work and patience, as in any field, pay off.

Find a Common Vision and Language

One theme that emerged among the collaborative efforts was the need for a common goal and language base. Some collaborators regretted not opening those discussions early in the process. The absence of a common language led to high staff turnover, and there were substantial delays before the programs became effective. Although juvenile justice and workforce development systems generally do not share programmatic goals, when they collaborate, it is with one objective: to change the behavior of the individual (increase employment attainment and upward mobility and reduce recidivism). Thus, the behavior and the population must be addressed first and then all systems or partnering agencies will need to cooperate to adopt the common goal, in this case, youth development.

Form Partnerships

Anticipate what each partner can bring to the table. The resources needed for an effective program, from money to staffing to materials and supplies, are often distributed across a variety of public and private agencies. Those partners want evidence that trading their resources will produce not only policy-related results, but some worthwhile outcomes for the agency, such as public recognition or access to resources in the future.

If you are not a policy entrepreneur, you or your agency can join a policy community that is interested in effecting change. Look to other systems for ideas and join the effort.

Look for Nontraditional Funding

Funding can come from many places: federal, local, or state government; foundations; businesses; associations. Gaining knowledge of systems (juvenile justice or workforce development, among others), making connections with potential partners, and nonstop networking outside your own circles are good avenues to new funding.

Seek or Create Broad RFPs

RFPs aimed at promoting self-sufficiency can have the unintended consequence of placing undue burdens on the funded agencies. What is evident from both the program and the policy profiles sections of the toolkit is that a broad range of services is needed to integrate young people into the workforce. Whether those services are delivered through partnerships or by a single entity, delivery still takes considerable planning and appropriate resources. Increased services also can lead to a widened net that places more burdens on participants. That factor must be considered.

Avoid the Status Quo

Long-term success comes from allowing for flexibility, learning from other systems and partners, and being willing to change. As a part of the process, your agency will need to be willing to educate others about your approaches. It is possible to mistake processes for goals, and people can believe they have a stake in processes even if those processes do not most effectively meet the goals of the broader policy.

Avoid Territorialism

This might be easier said than done, but before proceeding, take the time to determine where everyone stands. Realize that control of resources is crucial to organizational survival and that progress might be more rapid if respect is shown for the core resources of all organizations involved. Businesses guard financial resources; government agencies guard political resources; foundations, advocacy groups, and nonprofits guard legitimacy and reputation.

Overcome Barriers

All 19 initiatives faced challenges that could easily have put an end to initial partnerships or continued operations. Judges sentence youth to incarceration, partners become territorial, or funding is lacking. These are challenges to promoting positive workforce development, but each initiative found creative ways to address them.

Encourage Policy Entrepreneurs

Some of the most effective and innovative approaches begin with one person developing an idea and running with it. If you are a policy entrepreneur, enlist the support of partners with similar visions, even if they work in

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different systems. If a policy entrepreneur approaches you, be open to the possibilities, even as you maintain a realistic appreciation of what is possible. Sometimes the most unlikely partnerships can be the most productive.

Use Data

Your agency or partnership might not be able to afford an independent evaluator, but you still need to show proof of effectiveness, and without data, your chances of increased or continued funding could be compromised. Identify concrete, measurable, and realistic indicators of success and monitor them. When successful outcomes occur, profile them to the media, and provide concrete examples of your success.

Data are also important for planning your innovative approach or effective initiative. Agencies reported over and over again that their success was largely attributable to efforts early on to match the goal with data or needs assessments. This could include matching labor market needs with employment training or conducting needs assessments to verify that a proposed initiative will be useful in a given location.

Address Geographic Mismatch

Geographic mismatch is a common problem: Young offenders might live in one area, but find work in another. Being released from a facility far from home can confound the process of enrolling in school or getting a job. It is important to consider the local labor market and find

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partner agencies to fill gaps in implementation. Agencies that provide transportation, for example, can help young people find jobs outside a neighborhood with few opportunities.

Policymakers should recognize that an employment program in one area of the country might not work in another. Forming partnerships with the workforce development system and the private sector to integrate programming with employment forecasts and to secure training resources, curricula, and other needed training materials is essential to programs that look beyond the youthful offender's time in the system.

Learn from Events

Unfortunately, there will always be focusing events related to crime. High-profile murders, gang violence, and notorious incidents inside juvenile institutions bring close and sometimes unfair media scrutiny. In almost every social policy field, focusing events lead to policy changes—witness gun control legislation in the wake of the Columbine High School shootings. Many juvenile justice initiatives result from events or trends that capture public attention. They are part of public policy, however, and they should be used as learning tools. Not making a change in the face of a negative event can be irresponsible. Changing a system to better help young people is a positive response.

Expect Unintended Consequences

Every agency responded that unintended consequences were inevitable. Those challenges, however, generally were confronted immediately. A common situation involved new services, which often have new requirements. For example, a new program might require participants to find jobs within a specified period or return to jail. The intent is laudable, but the reincarceration would not occur if the new policy were not in place. When such concerns present themselves, policymakers must be ready to confront the system again and address the unintended consequence.

Unintended consequences also can be positive. ExplorNet's original intent was to connect the public school system to the Internet. The unintended result was a new and highly successful employment initiative for incarcerated youth.

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call to action

The American juvenile justice system has undergone major reform in recent years, in part because of high-profile violent crimes perpetrated by children and the public perception that the system, as currently configured, cannot prevent these events, hold young people accountable for their actions, or rehabilitate offenders. Despite reform and the erosion of its original mission, the system continues to be plagued by high rates of recidivism and a lack of public confidence.

Overall, the system has not been able to alter the trajectories of troubled young people or prepare them to assume productive adult roles. The combination of confinement, supervision, surveillance, and treatment commonly prescribed for young offenders has not achieved the desired results. Nevertheless, many states continue to increase spending on juvenile corrections, with poor results.

State and local policymakers and the juvenile justice system should take a closer look at promising initiatives for juvenile offenders that combine the principles of youth development and workforce development. The traditional approaches to academic and vocational education, anchored in the industrial age, should be abandoned. The juvenile justice system needs to more broadly adapt practices and policies that reflect what has been learned from the youth development and workforce development fields. The young people who find themselves tangled in the juvenile justice system must be given the same opportunities to establish nurturing relationships with adults; be buoyed by positive peer support; assume leadership roles; contribute to the well-being of their communities; and develop academic, vocational, and work readiness skills and competencies that are available to young people who have not been similarly disadvantaged.

Moreover, the many public systems charged with serving their needs must more effectively collaborate and share resources and expertise to realize shared and individual goals. No system can do it alone. Public systems must reach out to the private sector—business, civic organizations, religious institutions, and foundations—to gain assistance, guidance, and support.

As a nation, we cannot continue to cast off such large segments of our population and commit them to the margins of our society. The United States recently experienced a period of unprecedented prosperity in which employers sought workers in new and different places. Now, as the economy contracts, there is a different challenge of ensuring that court-involved youth can gain a strong foothold in the workplace. We have an opportunity to invest in the development of these young people, impart the skills and competencies demanded by the new economy, and connect them to a fluctuating labor market. All that remains is to get to work.

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ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of United Parcel Service, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs. For more information, visit the Foundation's website, www.aecf.org.

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